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3:98-CV-01633 MICROSTAR SOFTWARE V. EPIC MEGAGAMES INC

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PHILIP H. STILLMAN, Bar # 152861 SETH F. GORMAN, Bar # 182906

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Attorneys for plaintiff, MICROSTAR SOFTWARE, INC.

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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

MICROSTAR SOFTWARE, INC., a California corporation,

Plaintiff,

VS.

EPIC MEGAGAMES, INC.; and DOES 1 through) 10 inclusive,

Defendants.

CASE NO .: '98 CV 1633 JM LAB

COMPLAINT FOR:

- 1. DECLARATORY JUDGMENT;
- 2. VIOLATION OF THE SHERMAN ACT
- 3. INTENTIONAL INTERFERENCE WITH CONTRACTUAL RELATIONS;
- 4. UNFAIR COMPETITION;
- 5. CONSPIRACY

١.

PARTIES

- Plaintiff Micro Star is a California corporation with a usual place of business in San Diego County, California.
- 2. Defendant Epic MegaGames Inc. ("Epic") is a business entity with a usual place of business in Virginia. Upon information and belief, Epic is the copyright owner of Unreal. Epic regularly transacts business in San Diego County, California.
- 3. Defendants DOES 1 through 100 inclusive are sued herein under fictitious names; the true names and capacities are not known at this time, but the prayer is made that the same may be inserted herein when ascertained. Plaintiff is informed and believes and therefore alleges that each of the Defendants designated herein as a DOE is responsible in some manner for the events and happenings herein referred to, and proximately caused the damage to the Plaintiff as herein alleged.
- 4. At all times relevant, each of the defendants acted as the agent for each of the other defendants in doing the acts complained of herein.

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II.

<u>JURISDICTION</u>

- 5. The court has federal question jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. § 1338 pursuant to the Copyright Act of 1976 as amended, 17 U.S.C. § 101 et seg. and under 28 U.S.C. § 1337 pursuant to the Sherman Antitrust Act, 15 U.S.C. § 2.
 - 6. The court also has diversity jurisdiction pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1332(a)(1).
- 7. Jurisdiction over the state law claims is also conferred by the principles of supplemental jurisdiction, 28 U.S.C. § 1367 as well as 28 U.S.C. § 1338(b).
- 8. No amount in controversy is required for this action; however, the amount in controversy is in excess of \$1,000,000.

III.

VENUE

9. The cause of action arose in the State and Southern District of California in that a substantial part of the events and omissions that are the subject of this action occurred in the State

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and the Southern District of California, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(a) and (b). Moreover, all of the Defendants transact business in the Southern District of California and are subject to personal jurisdiction there, and venue is therefore appropriate under 28 U.S.C. § 1391(c) and 28 U.S.C. § 1400(a).

IV.

FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

- A. <u>Unreal</u>.
- 10. Unreal is a popular video game. "Unreal" is, according to Unreal's packaging, a registered trademark of the defendants.
- 11. Unreal is marketed by the defendants in two ways. First, individuals may obtain a "shareware" version of Unreal off of the Internet without charge. If the individual is satisfied with the game, he or she can register the game with the defendants for a fee. The shareware version of Unreal is substantially similar to the registered version and consists of certain "levels." However, to encourage individuals to purchase the registered version, the shareware version is limited in several ways. For example, it only includes a limited number of levels, a limited number of weapons, and does not permit multiple players. The shareware version, which is distributed without charge over the Internet, has the same appearance and characters as does the registered version.
- 12. The second way that Unreal is marketed is through commercial vendors for a fee. For the purchase price, a purchaser gets a "registered" copy of Unreal on a CD, which has a number of different levels.
- 13. Particularly germane to this action, the registered version also contains, as set forth on the Unreal packaging, an easy-to-use editor that enables the user to build new levels. The registered version thus permits purchasers to create new levels for Unreal, which can then be played using the registered version of Unreal.
 - 14. Without the registered version of Unreal, user-created data files cannot be played.
- 15. The defendants have used this feature as a selling point for the registered version of Unreal.
 - 16. Currently, there are hundreds of independently created data files available to the

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public over the Internet and on various electronic bulletin board systems ("BBS"). In fact, the creators of Unreal' own BBS distributes these levels created by users. These data files are therefore in the public domain.

- 17. Unreal purports to restrict the use of levels created with the level editor to noncommercial distribution by inclusion of a license with the game.
 - В. Micro Star's "Totally 4 Real."
- 18. Recognizing the difficulty facing registered users in distributing and obtaining other users' data files, Micro Star believed that a commercial market existed for a compilation of these third party-created data files. Micro Star collected these third party-created data files from public sources such as the Internet, and compiled a number of them on a CD entitled "Totally 4 Real." Micro Star did not create any of these data files nor use the defendants' software to create them.
- 19. The packaging, or "cover art" for Totally 4 Real is completely dissimilar to Unreal's cover art. In addition, Totally 4 Real's cover art prominently identifies Unreal as "a registered trademark of Epic Entertainment." Totally 4 Real's cover art also prominently states (1) that "this product is not affiliated with nor will it be supported by Epic Entertainment" and (2) in a bright red sticker, that the new levels "were independently created by 3rd parties not affiliated with Epic, creator of Unreal". Thus, there is no possibility that any reasonable consumer could mistake Totally 4 Real for Unreal or a product created by the defendants. Moreover, it complies with the district court's ruling in Microstar v. Formgen, Inc., 942 F.Supp. 1312 (S.D.Cal. 1996), affirming the lack of confusion in such identical disclaimers.
- Moreover, as discussed above, Totally 4 Real's cover art prominently states that in 20. order to use Totally 4 Real, the purchaser must purchase the registered version of Unreal. Thus, not only is there no possibility of confusion, but sales of Totally 4 Real actually complement or enhance sales of Unreal. Presumably, more consumers will purchase Unreal since there are many new levels to play, and consumers who have heard of one or more levels included in Totally 4 Real will want to purchase the registered version of Unreal in order to play those levels.
- 21. Totally 4 Real will be released to the public on or about September 12, 1998. There is a significant demand for Totally 4 Real.

- 22. At some time on or about August 28, 1998, the defendants began a course of conduct designed to prevent sales of Totally 4 Real nationally, so that the defendants could market their own new data files for Unreal. Accordingly, plaintiff is informed and believes that the defendants and their authorized agents began contacting major nationwide distributors of game software, including those who had already placed orders with Micro Star for thousands of units of Totally 4 Real, with the express purpose of wrongfully disrupting those vendors' contracts and purchase orders with Micro Star.
- 23. As a result of these threats, the defendants have threatened to cause the loss of thousands of unit sales to vendors, and will cost Micro Star hundreds of thousands of dollars in revenue.
- 24. In addition, the defendants threatened Micro Star with a copyright infringement action and impoundment of all copies of Totally 4 Real in order to intimidate Micro Star into removing Totally 4 Real from distribution.
- 25. At all times, the defendants knew or believed that Totally 4 Real did not infringe on their copyrights or trademarks, and knew that threats of legal action against Totally 4 Real's distributors were baseless. In particular, a district court of this district has already ruled that Microstar could release such additional game levels and that such levels did not infringe on any copyrights. Moreover, the defendants knew that all of the data files contained on the Totally 4 Real CD were in the public domain and created and distributed with the defendants' encouragement. Thus, the defendants made such threats solely for the anti-competitive purpose of preserving a market for their own product, which was not even ready for distribution.
- 26. Accordingly, without the injunctive and declaratory relief requested below, Micro Star will suffer irreparable harm to its business, and has already suffered significant monetary and reputational harm as a result of the defendants' misuse of their copyrights and trademarks.

FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION

(Declaratory Judgment)

27. Plaintiff realleges and incorporates by reference to allegations contained in paragraphs

1 through 30 as through set forth herein in full.

- 28. An actual controversy has arisen and exists among Micro Star and the defendants. The defendants contend that Totally 4 Real infringes on their copyrights and trademarks for Unreal. Micro Star disputes this contention.
- 29. Plaintiff desires a judicial declaration that Totally 4 Real does not infringe on either the copyrights or trademarks or rights held by the defendants. In addition, Micro Star seeks a declaration that the defendants cannot enforce their copyrights against Micro Star because of their misuse of the copyrights as set forth above.
- 30. Such a declaration of rights is necessary and appropriate at this time in order that Plaintiff may ascertain his rights and duties with respect to defendants, and each of them, and with respect to any third parties who may intend to or currently distribute Totally 4 Real.

SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION

(Violation of the Sherman Antitrust Act)

- 31. Plaintiff realleges and incorporates by reference to allegations contained in paragraphs 1 through 30 as through set forth herein in full.
- 32. Unreal and add-on programs for Unreal is a discrete market within the video game industry. Unreal currently accounts for a significant portion of the video game market.
- 33. As set forth above, the defendants have the specific intent to monopolize the relevant market and have conspired to attempt to monopolize the relevant market through, among other things, misuse of their copyright.
- 34. As set forth above, the defendants, through their knowingly baseless threats of legal action against Totally 4 Real distributors, have committed several anti-competitive acts in furtherance of their intent. In particular, the defendants' threat of copyright infringement lawsuits and impoundment is a sham.
- 35. Moreover, by virtue of their anti-competitive acts, the defendants have a dangerous probability of success in monopolizing the market. In fact, upon information and belief, Micro Star is the only competition in the relevant market, and the defendants' anti-competitive conduct threatens to eliminate all competition in the market.

36. As a result of the defendants' anticompetitive conduct and attempted monopolization barred by Section 2 of the Sherman Antitrust Act, Micro Star has suffered and continues to suffer damages in an amount to be determined at trial but in excess of \$500,000.

THIRD CAUSE OF ACTION

(Interference with Contractual Relations)

- 37. Plaintiff realleges and incorporates by reference to allegations contained in paragraphs 1 through 36 as through set forth herein in full.
- 38. The defendants knew of the existing and prospective business and contractual relations between Micro Star and its vendors.
- 39. By the wrongful acts set forth above, the defendants intentionally disrupted Micro Star's advantageous contractual and prospective relations with its vendors who had agreed to purchase or had purchased Nuke It.
- 40. The defendants knew that disruption of Micro Star's contractual relations would result from their copyright misuse, and intended that their anti-competitive conduct result in the disruption of Micro Star's contractual relations.
- 41. The defendants' wrongful acts alleged above were neither justified or privileged. Instead the defendants' actions were outside the realm of legitimate business transactions.
- 42. As a result of the defendants' intentional interference with Micro Star's contractual relations, Micro Star has suffered and continues to suffer damages in an amount to be determined at trial but in excess of \$500,000.
- 43. The defendants acted intentionally, maliciously, willfully and with the intent to injure Plaintiff, or to benefit defendants. Accordingly, the defendants should pay Plaintiff punitive damages in an amount not less than five million dollars (\$5,000,000.00), in accordance with proof at trial.

FOURTH CAUSE OF ACTION

(Unfair Competition under Cal. Bus. & Prof. Code § 17200 et seq.)

44. Plaintiff realleges and incorporates by reference to allegations contained in paragraphs 1 through 43 as through set forth herein in full.

- 45. The defendants' acts as set forth above, constitute unlawful, unfair or fraudulent business practices.
- 46. As a result of the defendants' unfair competition, Micro Star has suffered and continues to suffer damages in an amount to be determined at trial but in excess of \$500,000.

JURY DEMAND

47. Micro Star demands a trial by jury.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays for judgment as follows:

- 1. That defendants, and each of them, their agents, and servants be enjoined during the pendency of this action and permanently from contacting any vendor and contending, in any form of words or media, that Totally 4 Real infringes on the defendants' copyrights or trademarks, that a vendor should not carry Totally 4 Real, that the defendants may or will commence a legal action against the vendor as a result of the vendor carrying Totally 4 Real;
- 2. That defendants, and each of them, pay general and special damages to Plaintiff for defendants' unfair competition in accordance with proof at trial;
- 3. That defendants, and each of them, pay punitive and/or treble damages to Plaintiff for defendants' unfair competition and violation of the Sherman Antitrust Act in accordance with proof at trial;
- 4. That defendants, and each of them, pay Plaintiff its costs of this action and its reasonable attorneys' fees;
- 5. That the Court issue a declaration that Totally 4 Real does not infringe on any of the defendants' copyrights or trademarks;
- 6. That the Court issue a declaration that the defendants cannot enforce their copyrights against Micro Star because of the defendants' misuse of their copyrights; and

Unreal Complaint word - 7 -

7. Such other and further relief as this Court deems just and appropriate.

Respectfully Submitted,

FLYNN, SHERIDAN, TABB & STILLMAN

Dated: September 9, 1998

Philip H. Stillman, Esq. Attorneys for Plaintiff

Uurcal Complaint.wpd

TO:

Register of Copyrights

Copyright Office

Library of Congress Washington, D.C. 20559

REPORT ON THE FILING OR DETERMINATION OF AN ACTION OR APPEAL REGARDING A COPYRIGHT

In compliance with the provisions of 17 U.S.C. 508, you are hereby advised that a court action or appeal has been filed on the following copyright(s):

	foll	owing copyright(s):			
ACTION	APPEAL	APPEAL COURT NAME AND LOCATION			
DOCKET NO.	DATE FILED	United States District Court, Southern District of California			
98cv1633 JM (LAB)	9/9/98	880 Front Street, Room 4290 San Diego, CA 92101-8900			
PLAINTIFF	DEFENDANT				
Microstar Software, Inc		Epic Megagames, Inc			
COPYRIGHT REGISTRATION NO.	TITLE OF WORK		AUTHOR OF WORK		
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COPY ATTACHED	WRITTEN OPINION ATTACHED		DATE RENDERED		
Order Judgmen	t Yes	No No			

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